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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Ad Hoc Working Group on Trade Efficiency
First session
Geneva, 16 November 1992
Agenda item 3

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE WORKING GROUP

Draft work programme submitted by the Chairman

1. Pursuant to a New Partnership for Development: the Cartagena Commitment, adopted at the eighth session of the Conference, the Ad Hoc Working Group agreed, on the basis of Board decision 398 (XXXVIII) which sets out in the annex, section C, the terms of reference of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Trade Efficiency, the following work programme.

2. With the aim to fostering greater participation in international trade, in particular by small- and medium-sized enterprises, giving particular attention to countries and regions less advanced in the area of trade efficiency, the working group will work in the following six main areas:

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A. Information flows to build trade efficiency

In this area, the Working Group will:

(a) Identify the type of information available and further information needed, including the sources and means of access to such information, to make countries more trade efficient.

(b) Consider ways to enable countries and enterprises to access, use, maintain and update the information they need in the most cost efficient fashion, including methods to better identify local users needs.

(c) Explore ways to foster transparency in trade-related information flows, giving due consideration to confidentiality requirements as well as attempting to identify areas of agreement.

(d) Consider ways to promote the involvement of new users, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises, in information networks, and the use of regional information systems.

B. Facilitating trade

In this area, the Working Group will:

(a) Identify and promote ways to rationalise trade procedures and simplify and standardise information requirements. The work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) WP4, and other relevant bodies will be taken into account. Possibilities of reducing transaction costs should be identified.

(b) Study the problems linked to the need for adequate information and telecommunication infrastructure as a necessary condition for trade efficiency, including open access, installation, operation and training in order to build local capacity;

(c) Cooperate with UNECE WP4 to promote greater awareness, understanding and use of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), including the standards established through WP4 and the business practices necessary for the use of EDI, with special emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises and more generally new players in international trade.

C. Working towards Trade Efficiency: The role of Governments

In this area, the Working Group will:

(a) Study ways in which the legal, regulatory and administrative environments can be improved so as to allow greater national efficiency including recommendation for modal laws to support greater participation in global commerce using electronic techniques;

(b) Examine how the interface between the government and the private sector on the one hand, and the regulatory aspects of sectoral linkages (e.g. banks or transport) on the other hand, can best satisfy the requirements of trade efficiency.

D. Trade Points

UNCTAD will provide assistance to the member countries in implementing a pilot "Trade Point" programme which shall be based on the use of international standards designed towards open systems necessary for their interconnection. The Trade Points will ensure equal opportunity of access for interested trade partners. Such assistance will include:

(a) Establishment and operation of pilot Trade Points

(i) Identification of pilot Trade Points

(ii) Identify the elements needed for international/regional cooperation between national Trade Points

(iii) Assistance to each pilot Trade Point to determine:

- functional options
- technical requirements
- funding requirements
- training requirements

(b) Evaluation

(i) evaluate the pilot Trade Points and their effectiveness and efficiency in terms of:

- creating awareness of the potential benefits
- overcoming obstacles to their effectiveness and efficiency
- meeting the needs of users, especially small and medium-sized enterprises
- cost effectiveness and efficiency
- involving supporting sectors such as banking, transport, telecommunications, insurance and customs
- building co-operation and linkages at the regional and international levels
- meeting the training requirements of the Trade Point operators and users

(ii) evaluate the efficiency in the use of UNCTAD assistance.

(c) Recommendations

Develop recommendations for future Trade Point programme functionality, set-up, operations, training and funding.

E. Technical assistance

(a) Capacity- building with special emphasis on training and infrastructure including in cooperation with WP4 develop educational materials in trade facilitation and EDI: assistance in the training of national trade facilitation and EDI experts; assistance in the establishment of national trade facilitation organizations; and expert advice in dealing with specific facilitation in EDI implementation problems;

(b) Facilitating workshops and the 1994 Symposium

(c) Develop suitable training programmes for technical assistance

F. 1994 Symposium

The Working Group shall prepare the 1994 international symposium on trade efficiency, as called for in paragraphs 157 and 158 of the Cartagena Commitment. For use at that time, the Working Group shall undertake research, prepare publications, explanatory or educational materials, including those that emphasize legal or other focuses.

G. Resources and Working methods

The Secretariat of UNCTAD will:

(a) carry out an assessment of the workload and the financial implications of each activity included in the work programme with a view to formulating proposals to identify the need for additional funding and to encourage voluntary extra-budgetary contributions and will make every effort to provide details of the results of the assessment to Member States, in conformity with UN procedures, in advance of the meetings of the Working Party on Medium-term Plan and Programme Budget in March 1993;

(b) establish a core advisory group of experts constituted according to the procedure for electing the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group. This group will meet periodically with the secretariat to advise and assist in carrying-out the work programme. In addition the secretariat will request from member States recommendations to develop a roster of experts. These additional experts will be invited by the secretariat to participate as appropriate in the meetings of the core advisory group of experts depending upon the subject under discussion.

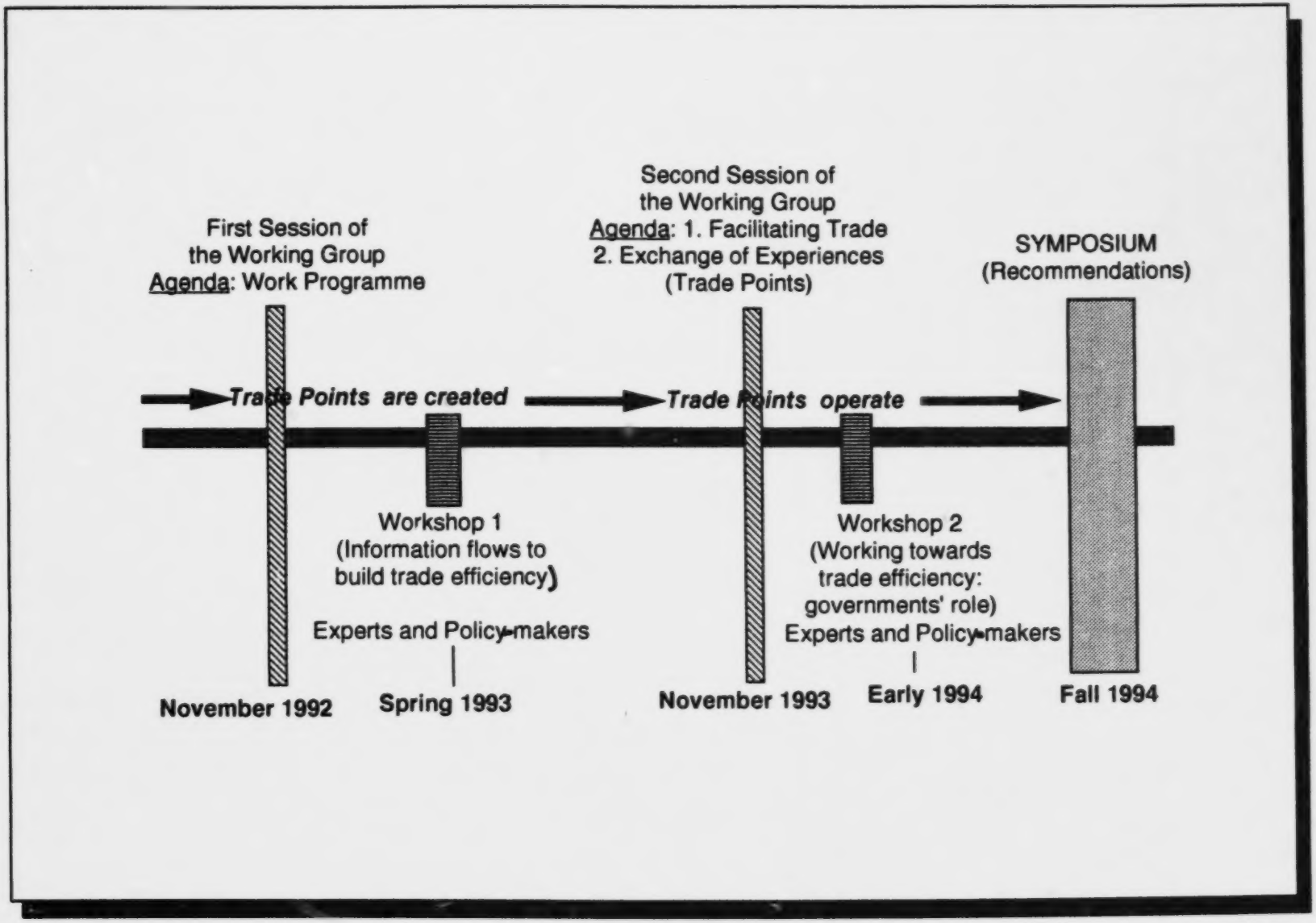
B - Practical organization

1. It is proposed that element A above (Information flows for Trade Efficiency) be the subject of a workshop in the course of Spring 1993, and that Point 3 (Working towards Trade Efficiency: the role of Governments) be the subject of a workshop in early 1994.

2. Element B (Facilitating trade) would be the first item on of the agenda of the second session of the Ad Hoc Working Group, to be held in November 1993; the second item on that agenda would consist in a first assessment of the work done at the Trade Point.

3. It is understood that all the elements of this work (meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group, workshops and work at the Trade Points) would converge towards the formulation of recommendations for the 1994 Symposium.

This timetable is summarized in the diagramme below


First Session of
the Working Group
Agenda: Work Programme
Second Session of
the Working Group
Agenda: 1. Facilitating Trade
2. Exchange of Experiences
(Trade Points)
SYMPOSIUM
(Recommendations)
Trade Points are created
Trade Points operate
Workshop 1
(Information flows to
build trade efficiency)
Experts and Policy-makers
Workshop 2
(Working towards
trade efficiency:
governments' role)
Experts and Policy-makers
November 1992
Spring 1993
November 1993
Early 1994
Fall 1994